



District 108

News

Legislative Update 2008



REPRESENTATIVE RONALD BRISÉ

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COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Committee on Utilities and Telecommunications

Ranking Democrat

Committee on Audit and Performance

Jobs and Entrepreneurship Council

Joint Committee on Public Service Commission Oversight

Select Committee to Protect Personal Information

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Dear Constituent,

The 2008 Legislative Session ended earlier this month and as you may know, it was a tough one due to the economic downturn. However, I am glad to say that the Florida Legislature successfully passed two legislative bills and nine appropriation projects I sponsored, totaling more than \$7,000,000.00, and are all now pending upon the Governor's approval.

I can assure you that I represented you and our common interests in Tallahassee to the best of my ability. My colleagues in the House and Senate supported and passed bills on the school grading system, mortgage fraud, health insurance, environmental protection and historical health coverage for autism, all of which I strongly supported. There is more work to be done in all of those areas and I am adamant that the Legislature must continue its efforts to improve the quality of life of all Floridians.

I hope this post-session newsletter will inform you of the main accomplishments from the Florida Legislature's 2008 session. Most of all, I hope it encourages you to share your thoughts with me on these issues and those which matter to you the most.

As always, I thank you for the privilege and honor to serve you in this capacity. I have had the opportunity to meet many of you at community events, town hall meetings, homeowners association meetings, city and village council meetings. I look forward to strengthening our relationship and continuing to serve you in this capacity.

Yours In Service,

Ronald Brise

2008 LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

EDUCATION: Beginning in 2009, high schools will be graded on other factors instead of FCAT scores only. This also discourages undermining the regular curriculum to prepare for the FCAT test. Overall, this bill encourages a more well-rounded education for our students. Other bills include:

- **School Curriculum:** This bill orders the State Department of Education to overhaul the current curriculum to make it more intense and rigorous.
- **Tuition Hikes:** A 6% increase in tuition for community colleges increases the cost for post-secondary education.
- **Scholarship Program:** The state's Corporate Income Tax Scholarship Program expanded to \$118 million which will allow 5,000 additional low-income children to receive vouchers towards private education.

HEALTHCARE: The new law requests health insurance companies to negotiate agreements with the state on how they will cover diagnosis and treatment of autism-related disorders. If companies don't enter into such agreements, the state will require certain coverage by July of next year. In addition, another health insurance bill will allow approximately 3.8 million uninsured Floridians to have access to basic low-cost health insurance.

FORECLOSURE: A foreclosure bill requires consultants to comply with stricter regulations to encourage homeowners to be informed of their rights when they sign contracts. In addition,

- **Mortgage Fraud:** Increases penalties for those who commit mortgage fraud and allows for reassessment of value of homes that have been affected by fraud
- **Partial Property Taxes:** Aids those who are unable to afford their yearly property taxes by allowing them to negotiate a payment plan.

11 YEAR-OLD DISTRICT 108 CONSTITUENT, JACK DAVIS INSPIRES NEW FLORIDA LAW TO HELP HOMELESS

The law is called the "Jack Davis Florida Restaurant Lending a Helping Hand Act" and encourages restaurants and other eateries to donate leftover food to homeless shelters by freeing them of liability for food poisoning or any other illness. The bill does so by expanding the definition of "perishable food" in the current Florida Statute to include foods prepared at licensed public food services establishments. The bill was signed into a law by Gov. Crist on April 22nd, 2008.

LEGISLATION & PROJECTS SPONSORED BY REPRESENTATIVE BRISÉ

- The Legislature passed a bill promoting the awareness of the child welfare system and designates the second Monday in May as "Child Welfare Professionals Recognition Day"
- The Legislature passed a bill establishing a specified timeframe to complete postdoctoral training in psychology and expanding the Board of Psychology's authority to run more efficiently
- The Legislature passed appropriation projects which would impact large sectors of the population in Miami-Dade County, North Miami, El Portal & Biscayne Park such as water and health facility projects. The projects are awaiting Governor Crist's approval



Q &A: FLORIDA HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION

1. Give us a brief background of your office and the services that you offer?

Florida Housing is a public-private corporation created by the Florida Legislature 25 years ago to help fellow Floridians obtain safe, decent housing that might otherwise be unavailable to them through financing.

Rental Housing Programs: Multifamily Mortgage Revenue Bond, Low Income Housing Tax Credit, Elderly Housing Community Loan and Home Investment Partnership programs

Homeownership and Special Programs: Homeownership Pool Program, Mortgage Credit Certificate Program, Predevelopment Loan Program, Demonstration Loans and the Affordable Housing Catalyst Program

Disaster Recovery and Workforce Housing: Hurricane Housing Recovery Program, Rental Recovery Loan Program,

For complete list of programs and foreclosure resources, visit www.floridahousing.org

2. Many people within the professional workforce are unable to afford homes in Miami-Dade County. Do workforce housing programs exist to assist them in finding homes in areas where they work? The Florida Housing Locator at www.floridahousingsearch.org or at 1.877.428.8844 will help Floridians find affordable housing. There are more than 2,000 Miami-Dade affordable rental units listed as available in the Locator's database.

3. Inform our readers on the process through which the state funds county housing programs.

The state assists local governments by funding through the State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program (SHIP). Miami-Dade can serve Floridians up to 140% of area median income and also have additional source of affordable housing funding through the local discretionary surtax on documents. (Please contact our office for local SHIP contact information).

4. What is recommended for first-time homebuyers?

The link to the First Time Homebuyer Wizard on the website will link Floridians to first time homebuyer opportunities by county. Also, please feel free to call the call center at 800.814.HOME

5. Are there future workforce housing plans in the pipeline for constituents of District 108?

The Florida Housing Finance Corporation has awarded 3 workforce projects in Miami-Dade County with the Representative Mike Davis Community Workforce Housing Innovation Pilot Program funding for 2007. The three workforce projects could potentially provide 76 rental units and 82 homeownership units/opportunities.

ONE-ON-ONE WITH REPRESENTATIVE BRISE

Excerpts from a Miami Herald article written by Carli Teproff on May 23rd, 2008

After spending about two months in Tallahassee, Florida state Rep. Ronald Brisé is back in town and making his rounds to the municipalities he oversees to share his legislative experience. Brisé deems this session as being the most difficult because of the state's financial woes. "I don't want to hear another cut; I don't want to hear another reduction in services," said Brisé, who was first elected to office in 2006. "I think everyone went prepared for a tough session, but I think it was a lot tougher than we expected."

Q. What was your overall impression of this year's legislative session? When we began looking at the fiscal year, we were talking about a budget of \$71.5 billion and we ended up with a budget of \$66.2 billion. So that created an environment that was very tense.

Q. Are there any bills that you pushed for that didn't pass. If so, what and what's your reaction? One is a bill requiring hospitals to put information out as to the ratio of nursing care that is available for the various types of ailments. How many patients, per nurse, per floor.

Another bill that we thought was extremely important was a bill cracking down on people who scammed other people who are in foreclosure. Neither passed, but we will try again next year.

Q. In your eyes, what was the best/worst legislation that came out of session? One was the ability for individuals to have healthcare at an affordable price. I think both chambers agreed that for a price of about \$150, people would be able to purchase health insurance for them and their family. I think that brings us a long way. The other one is the Autism Bill. That bill requires that insurance companies provide coverage for children with autism. That is something that is very important to us. One of the bills I thought was a waste of time was the Guns at Work bill, which is in essence giving people the right to take guns to work and leave them in



the car.

Q. Can you explain some of the bills that will affect local municipalities? Some bills that will really affect us is, No. 1, the budget. The way the budget came out this year will in essence reduce whatever funding comes down from the state and that is potentially problematic for all the municipalities. Some of the other bills that affect municipalities is the energy bill in terms of what we are trying to do as a state toward moving to alternative energy.

Q. Can you describe a day in your life during session? My day normally begins while we are in session about 5 a.m. I get up to do about 1 1/2 hours of reading of whatever is coming before me for that day. By then I am ready to leave my apartment. Normally, we have a pre-session briefing. Then the session itself. At the end of the day, sometimes we have post-session briefing to sort of recap the day... Then it's a matter of studying again. If the session is done at 8 or 7 p.m. then we will have an early night; that means we will get some sleep at [midnight] or 1 a.m.

Q. What advice do you have for city leaders in order to get funding for city projects during next year's session? I think city leaders, as they plan for next year's session, they really need to look at projects that will have the largest impact on the city or municipality. Generally, the state is very interested in ensuring that our infrastructure is intact. City leaders also really need to engage themselves in the process.

